

Market Pressures & Idealistic Efforts: Addressing Community Impacts and Perverse Incentives through Fair Trade Learning

Eric Hartman, EHartman@Providence.edu
Cassandra Chaire, Cassandra@amizade.org



The Challenge:

- Every year more than one hundred thousand American students participate in study and volunteer abroad programs (Open Doors, 2012).
- Many programs focus solely on student experience and neglect the value and sacrifice of communities where they work (Stoecker and Tryon, 2009).
- Others fail to recognize the importance and power of a mutual learning partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect (Clayton, 2011).
- These challenges are even more worrisome when considered in the context of the growing market for study abroad, a marketplace so unregulated and opaque that former New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo briefly launched an investigation of several university study abroad offices and third-party providers (Redden, 2008).
- The global youth travel industry is currently worth 173 billion US Dollars per year; youth travel outstripped the global music industry and the top 20 premier football clubs in terms of global revenue generation; higher education and volunteering are the biggest growth sectors of the youth travel landscape; and emerging markets will overtake advanced economies in international arrivals by 2026 (Staywyse, 2012).
- Researchers in the international development literature have specifically called for a fair trade labeling system for volunteer travel organizations (Mdee & Emmott, 2008).

Leakage Rate: The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) estimates that leakage rates or the direct income for an area that remains locally after all expenses are paid by foreign tourists is as low as 5%. On average only around \$5 of \$100 spent by foreign tourists remains in the host community. Amizade considers the Jamaica model of village tourism ideal in terms of its capacity to extend financial benefits of exchange throughout the community, where the organization estimates a leakage rate of approximately 64%, which on a typical program yields income to over 60 individuals.

Defining Fair Trade Learning

- “engaging only in community-driven development, in which community leaders and organizations help decide the terms of foreign student projects in their communities;
- encouraging and opening classes for local students to audit, free of charge;
- offering fair compensation to all of those who make study and volunteer abroad programs possible, including guides, drivers, home-stay families, cooks, and community organizations;
- and working to offer partially or fully subsidized opportunities for individuals in our communities abroad to engage in service-learning programs in the United States “

- Amizade Global Service-Learning

The Suggestion: Enhanced transparency for all global service-learning, including leakage rate, community investment, fair wage remuneration, length of time in community, community response and survey data, and process for project planning.

We are interested in your feedback. Please email us above, tweet us @buildingbetterw, visit <http://buildingabetterworld.wordpress.com/> for discussion and resources, or go to Amizade.org for more information on Amizade.

Documenting Community Satisfaction:

Drawing heavily on community concerns documented by Stoecker and Tryon (2009), as well as elsewhere in the service-learning and international development literatures, we surveyed 69 community members in Bolivia, Jamaica, and Tanzania. The responses indicate:

Based on 69 community member survey responses from Bolivia, Jamaica, & Tanzania.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Amizade projects cause immediate positive impacts in [the community].	73%	15%	11%	0	0	
Amizade projects jumpstart [community] residents to participate in local service.	68%	22%	8%	0	1.4%	
Through the partnership, [the community] develops local leaders.	70%	20%	7%	0	4%	
[The community] receives resources through the partnership that it would not otherwise receive.	71%	20%	4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Amizade-[partner org.] programs provide visiting students and volunteers with meaningful education about [community], community organizing, and service.	90%	5%	3%	0	1.6%	
[Community] residents benefit from cultural exchange with visitors.	74%	20%	3%	1.4%	3%	
[Community] residents develop friendships or connections with visitors that outlast an individual program.	80%	15%	4.3%	0	1.4%	
Overall, the Amizade-[partner organization] relationship is very positive.	80%	16%	2.7%	0	1.3%	
Amizade visitors, when volunteering, take away jobs that could provide locals with paid employment.	20%	7%	6%	4.4%	63%	
Amizade visitors are rude and disrespectful toward locals.	1.7%	0	3.5%	3.5%	91%	
Amizade programs are not long enough to make an important impact in the community.	14%	18%	13%	24%	30%	
Amizade programs are not long enough for visitors to learn meaningfully about [community], community organizing, or service.	16%	13%	19%	27%	24%	
Amizade is a trusted organization.	76%	18%	5.5%	0	0	
Amizade works collaboratively with others.	79%	21%	0	0	0	